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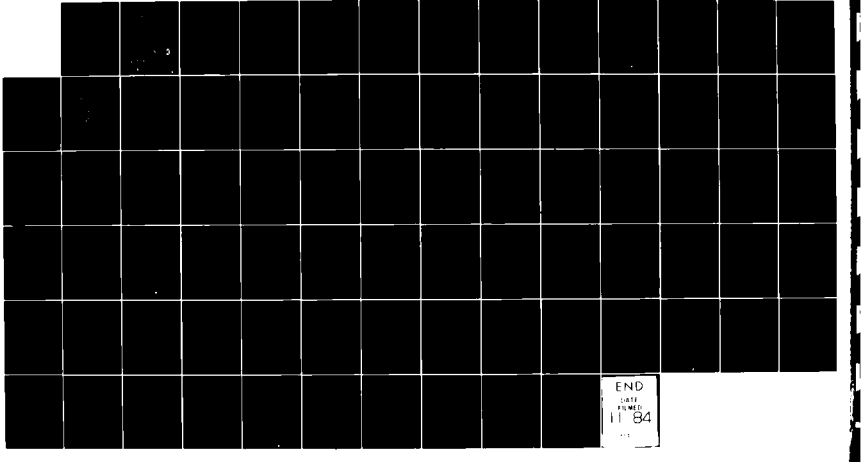

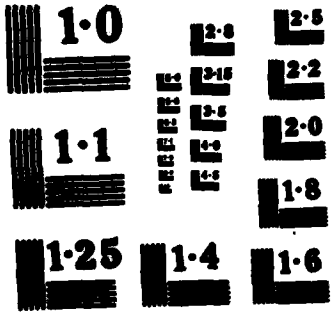
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US Policy in Southwest Asia:

a failure in perspective

Robert G. Lawrence

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by

Colonel Robert G. Lawrence, USAF
Senior Fellow

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Foreword

Over-reliance upon military action as the predominant instrument of US foreign policy in Southwest Asia is the danger against which this essay warns.

Colonel Robert G. Lawrence, ~~US Air Force,~~ is less troubled by questions of US military strength than by policymakers' insensitivity to the historical, religious, and regional dynamics of Southwest Asia in general and the Persian Gulf states in particular. Security assistance, although important, ~~Lawrence writes,~~ has been mistakenly considered *the essential element* of US policy when it should complement, not constitute US diplomacy.

Too long, ~~Colonel Lawrence argues,~~ have we failed to understand the Arab view of the world in which they live. Our policymakers have slighted the complexity and the diversity of Arab religions, politics, and history—forces which inform and direct Arab actions.

Colonel Lawrence directly addresses the tough questions, such as US support of Israel, widely inconsistent policies for foreign military sales, US failure in Iran, and US inaction during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Interviewing over fifty prominent Arab government officials, military leaders, diplomats, scholars, and businessmen, Colonel Lawrence brings

immediacy and insight to this frank, somewhat controversial study of Southwest Asia. His essay is a plea for an intelligent, courageous, and forward-looking appraisal of US policy in one of the most vital regions of the world. For that reason, the National Defense University is pleased to present it.

Richard D. Lawrence
Lieutenant General, US Army
President, National Defense University

About the Author

Colonel Robert G. Lawrence, United States Air Force, is currently serving as a Special Assistant for the Middle East to the Director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, Department of State, Washington DC. He has been in this position since June 1983.

Colonel Lawrence is a graduate of the United States Air Force Academy and spent the period from 1964 to 1970 in various flying assignments, acquiring over 3,000 hours of flying time and a tour of duty in Vietnam from 1969 to 1970. He received an MA degree in Middle East Area Studies from the University of Utah in 1973 and spent a year in attache and Arabic language training in Washington DC from 1976 to 1977. Following language training, Colonel Lawrence was the Air Attache to Saudi Arabia with accreditation to North Yemen. Upon returning from Saudi Arabia, Colonel Lawrence served as the Chief of the Middle East/Africa Plans and Policy Division, Headquarters US Air Force and graduated from the National War College in June 1983.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to the interviewees, whose candid and open cooperation made it possible to credibly reflect Arab views of US policy. The insights and feelings they expressed formed the basis for my research and added immeasurably to the conclusions I reached. I have not identified the interviewees, however, since I talked with them on a non-attribution basis, and I must respect their trust in me that allowed them to speak freely.

I am particulary indebted to Colonel Fred Kiley and Major Don Anderson of the National Defense University. In addition to his extraordinary editing ability, Fred's understanding of the person behind the words and his use of thoughtfully tailored motivational techniques made writing and rewriting rewarding. Don Anderson is one of a kind. His wit, insight, and ability to get to the heart of the matter made my job a lot easier and created a productive and challenging atmosphere for completing my work.

Ambassador Marshall Wiley, former Ambassador to Oman and a longtime friend, was an active participant in the review process and his deep understanding and knowledge of the Middle East were most welcome. I am particularly grateful for his personal encouragement and interest in my effort, and feel fortunate to know him as a friend and colleague.

Notwithstanding all the constructive support, criticism, and ideas that made this work possible, the burden of responsibility for the final product rests entirely with the author.

RGL

preface

The uncompromising atmosphere of confrontation in Southwest Asia and the inability of the United States to reach a common understanding with the states of that region for the protection of mutual interests have stimulated my writing this assessment. As an observer of and participant in policymaking and implementation during the past seven years, I became increasingly aware that the same political, cultural and perceptual obstacles persistently frustrate US efforts to insure peace and stability in the region. Success in resolving the Arab-Israeli dilemma remains elusive and deceptive as gains on one side become losses on the other. The United States continues to misinterpret or ignore Arab perceptions of the basic peace and security issues, and rhetoric on both sides obscures the intent of US and Arab security goals.

I believe more strongly than ever that the United States is approaching a stalemate in its regional security relationships. Both Israel and the Arab states perceive the US political and military commitments to each of them as mutually exclusive, and they register doubt and concern over the intent and validity of US security assurances. Within the United States domestic, economic, and political influences mitigate against pressure on either the Arabs or Israelis to come to terms. With little relief in sight in resolving these fundamental contradictions, the United States finds itself dealing with an Arab world reluctant to cooperate militarily in the protection of vital US interests in the Persian Gulf, while US strategic interests in the region remain hostage to the Arab view of the threat to those interests and to the overriding Arab-Israeli problem.

From my vantage point first in Saudi Arabia from 1977 to 1979, and then in Washington, I observed a dramatic shift in the emphasis and substance of US policy toward the region. Frustrated on the diplomatic front in dealing with the Arab-Israeli issue and confronted with the loss of Iran and Afghanistan in 1979, the pressure mounted in Washington to reestablish US credibility and reputation as a reliable security partner. The creation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF), the search for military bases in the region, expanded security assistance, and the initiation of the strategic consensus concept all signaled a significantly greater reliance on the military instrument of policy to preserve our interests and deal with the persistent regional problems.

The protection of oil, free access to the Persian Gulf, and the prevention of further Soviet expansion in the region became the predominant concerns in Washington. US policymakers viewed a commitment and capability to project military power as the most reasonable option available to protect these interests. US impotence in dealing with deeply rooted political issues, an inability to prevent or halt intraregional conflict, and the need to bolster sagging US credibility among the moderate Arab states, fueled the fires of those in Washington demanding quick, visible action to shore up the vulnerable US position in the region. As strategic consensus and the RDJTF became central elements of the US approach to the region, the US reacted by adopting single issue-related policies or policies of inaction, some of which were mutually incompatible and often confusing to our friends in the area.

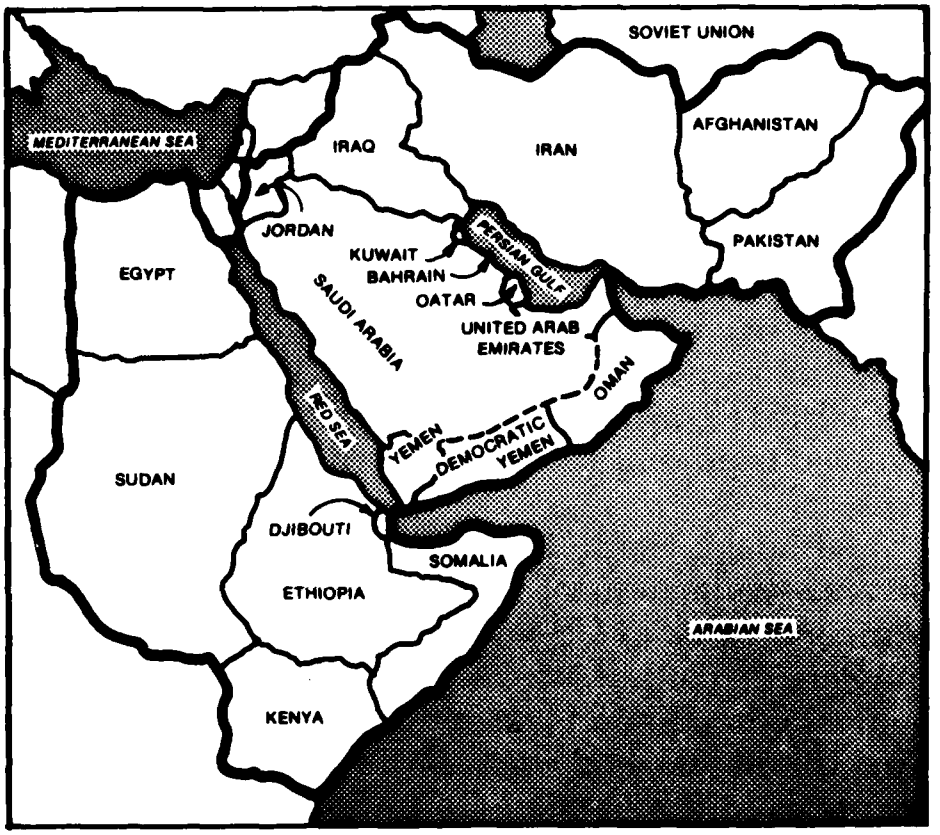
This essay examines the "military first" approach as the major component of US foreign policy in

Southwest Asia in terms of its content, validity, and effectiveness. US efforts to implement the "military first" approach are examined from a regional perspective, looking from Southwest Asia toward the West. The various commercial, political, and economic aspects of US policy are not addressed in detail, although I acknowledge their contribution to the overall bilateral relationships. For the purpose of this work, I have used the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff definition of Southwest Asia which includes countries of East and North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and the waters of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. (See map, page xiv) This area is now the responsibility of the US Central Command (USCENTCOM), a new unified command, which evolved from and incorporates the RDJTF.

Although Southwest Asia represents a large and diverse collection of geography and culture, the principal focus of US interest in the region centers on the Persian Gulf. It is here that US policy and strategy is most crucial and is meeting its greatest challenges. The thrust of this work is directed at those Arab countries in the Persian Gulf littoral.

My chief premise is that the military instrument of foreign policy should be just one of several instruments used in pursuing long-term solutions to persistent problems. The "military first" approach as the predominant instrument of policy may offer short-term solutions, but when used in isolation it may also diminish the opportunity for the permanent resolution of deep-rooted problems and the ultimate protection of vital US interests.

To present the Arab view of US policy and activity in the region, I interviewed—in the fall of 1982—some fifty Arab government officials, diplomats, military



SOUTHWEST ASIA

leaders, scholars, and businessmen. And, encouraging candor, I conducted these dialogues on a non-attributable basis. A large portion of my study is based on these interviews and discussions, and highlights Arab views which US policymakers should consider when developing policy. Although many of the views differ significantly from predominant US perceptions of what is required to insure peace and stability in the region, these views represent a near-unanimous outlook of those interviewed—and, right or wrong, these perceptions must not only be respected, but considered in our policymaking process. To ignore the Arab point of view is to continue to address fundamental, historical problems with transitory, near-term fixes, which serve neither our ultimate objectives nor those of the countries in the region.

My concluding recommendations are not meant to be prescriptive but are intended as alternative approaches for consideration. While I anticipate opposition to the specific recommendation to create a separate and independent strategic policy group, I am convinced that such a concept is essential. The overworked bureaucracy has neither the time nor the energy to focus on more than just day-to-day problems, and thus is never afforded the luxury of conducting long-term, comprehensive planning.

We must not allow the success of our adversaries to push us into ill-considered policies or strategies for which we may be unprepared simply because we feel we have to do something.

William O. Staudenmaier
Strategic Studies Institute
Carlisle Barracks, 1981

US foreign policy toward Southwest Asia is vague, fragmented, occasionally at odds with the interests, goals, and concerns of the region, and creates misunderstandings both at home and abroad. The United States has articulated its goals and interests in the region, but has not taken the next essential step of translating them into a comprehensive, coherent policy from which a national strategy can be developed. Harold Saunders, the former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, testified before the House Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East on 24 March 1980: "The US does not have an overarching policy for the Middle East. We have a collection of policies." With the exception of initiatives by Presidents Carter and Reagan to bring about a settlement of the Arab-Israeli problem, the focus of US policy has been on the Soviet threat. Consequently, US policy has evolved into a series of military actions to deter or defeat Soviet aggression and expansion in Southwest Asia. But such a military approach lacks credibility and may be counter-productive if not developed within an overall

political and diplomatic context. Unfortunately, the United States has focused on specific issues without considering the larger relationships and long-term imperatives in the region as a whole: the means have become the ends and the process more important than the results. Long-term national security policy has become subservient to tenuous and questionable military initiatives and objectives.

US foreign policy toward Southwest Asia is proof of the effect and influence of competitive bureaucracy, special interest groups, one-term administrations, and domestic economic and political imperatives, all of which demand demonstrable, immediate solutions to persistent foreign policy problems. Such an atmosphere forces hasty decisions based solely on US perceptions without full consideration of available alternatives, regional perceptions, or long-term effect. In the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution and Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the primary thrust of Southwest Asian policy has been to bolster US and regional military capabilities to protect against the Soviet threat. Initiated under Carter, continuing and expanding under Reagan, the United States has sought and gained access to military facilites in Oman, Egypt, Kenya, and Somalia; procured and stockpiled military equipment in the region; conducted major military exercises; continued US naval deployments in the Indian Ocean; and actively promoted the sale of modern and sophisticated weapons to Israel and to the moderate Arab countries of the region.

Our "military first" approach to Southwest Asian policy has proceeded along two seemingly compatible but ill-conceived lines: strategic consensus and the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF), and its by-product, the US Central Command (USCENTCOM). Both approaches derive from our

persistent bipolar (US vs USSR) view of the world and are thus accepted and acted upon as the foundation of US policy in the region. Considering the importance of the region's energy resources and its strategic, geopolitical position, can the United States continue to rely so heavily on the military instrument to protect our vital interests when the real threat to our interests may be the inherent political, economic, and social instability which will not respond to military solutions?

US interests in the region

Since 1973, each administration has defined and emphasized US interests in Southwest Asia, and these interests have essentially remained the same: assured access to oil; the survival of Israel; stable and secure regimes in the region; peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict; and prevention of the influence or takeover of the region by an outside power whose interests are inimical to those of the United States and the region.[1] The United States, by presidential commitment, has declared access to oil, the survival of Israel, and the prevention of Soviet influence or takeover as "vital" interests of the United States—interests we will protect with military force.

oil

The Gulf states control over one-half of the world's proven oil reserves and provide 34 percent of the total world oil production. US interest in Gulf oil and the need for unimpeded access to that oil is obvious, and necessary for the economic well-being of most of the Western world and Japan.[2] More than that, it is a national interest understood and shared by the average US citizen; thus, little domestic controversy is evoked over the pronounced use of military force to protect and insure access to that oil.

israel

The United States has consistently guaranteed the survival of Israel. It is an interest which cannot be abandoned, not because Israel is a vital strategic asset but because the US commitment to Israel reflects our constancy and reliability to honor commitments worldwide. To do anything less would severely damage our credibility. The US dilemma lies in the fact that similar commitments have been made to Israel's enemies, which poses the following questions: Would the United States use military force against our Arab friends if they participated in another combined, military adventure against Israel? Would the United States use force against Israel if it attacked the Saudi oilfields? Where do US interests really lie? The Arabs have asked these questions, and the Israelis are likely to have asked them too. The absence of an acceptable answer and the doubt it casts on US reliability and intent inhibit US security cooperation with countries of the region and affect our ability to protect our vital interests.

the soviet union

By Presidential pronouncement, the US is committed to prevent the influence or expansion into the region by an outside power whose interests are inimical to ours and those of the regional states. In January 1980, President Carter issued the Carter Doctrine which states, "Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the USA and will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force." Reassuring at first, this US posture is now perceived much differently in the Arab world. Significant doubt has been cast on the meaning of "vital interests" as expressed by President Carter. The

United States has not convinced the countries of the Gulf that we have just as great an interest in protecting them as we do in preserving access to oil. We have created doubt about our ultimate intentions and what US resolve would be if the region were oil poor.

Clearly, President Carter was referring to the Soviet Union when he mentioned the threat to the region by an outside force. This view of the threat is not universally shared by our European allies nor by our Arab friends. There is little doubt that a Soviet invasion of the Gulf region would have grave security and economic consequences for the West. The United States should be prepared to take the necessary military action to prevent such a Soviet move, with preparations based on a clearly articulated policy which accounts for the security concerns of the region as well as our own. But, as King Hussein of Jordan said, "When the US speaks of Soviet threats, and then Israel bombs a nuclear reactor in Baghdad, in a country which doesn't even border Israel, Washington's argument is lost as far as very, very many of us are concerned."[3]

The primary question is whether the United States is doing all it can or should to protect its vital interests. Certainly a country's military capability bears on what it declares to be its foremost interests. A country confident in its capability to use its military power may choose to select and defend a much wider range of interests than a country with limited military capability. But should a nation depend almost solely on its military capability to secure its interests? Should concentrated diplomatic, political, and economic efforts be relegated to a secondary role, and long-term solutions be neglected for quick, short-term military fixes? Should not the best of each instrument of foreign policy be applied if the interests are truly vital? Can the

United States realistically expect to attain its goals with a "military first" approach in a region awash in divergent political, social, economic, and religious conditions?

If the United States is committed to promoting and insuring the security and stability of the region as a whole, then this goal should be the foundation of our foreign policy. For political, economic, and strategic reasons, it is imperative that we develop and pursue courses of action that serve the region as a whole. To do so will require the United States to expand its time horizon by forming a policy and strategy based on long-term goals which are both feasible and well defined. To focus on individual problems and their near-term solutions without reference to the interrelated historical factors is the naive and dangerous path, since historical factors continue to dictate the course of events in Southwest Asia.

A comprehensive peace, the Palestinian homeland, and Jerusalem issues do not appear, on the surface, to be vital to the survival or security of the United States. However, the historical, political, and ethnic roots of these basic issues make them the most dominant and persistent problems confronting US decisionmakers in our bilateral and multilateral relations with the countries in the region. The attainment of US goals and objectives in the region is almost exclusively dependent on progress toward resolution of the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian problem. The longer this issue is left unresolved, the greater the chance of continued conflict and turmoil, the greater the loss of US trust and credibility, and the greater the opportunities for Soviet penetration in the region.

strategic consensus

The strategic consensus concept, which implies that a direct Soviet military threat to the Gulf is inevitable if not imminent, is arguable. Can the Soviets, either politically or economically, afford to occupy Iran or the Gulf states? Do they have the will and capability to do so in light of their problems in Eastern Europe and Afghanistan? Would they risk a nuclear confrontation with the United States? Do they instead have the patience and determination to sit back and wait for opportunities which they can exploit and influence without direct military intervention?

Strategic consensus, which calls for the mobilization and unification of the countries of the Middle East into some sort of defense alliance with the United States in order to deter or defeat the overt Soviet military threat, ignores important regional political and military realities. This concept and its focus on the worst case Soviet threat awkwardly fits the historical context of the Middle East, and ignores the more likely conflicts which threaten regional stability and our vital interests: Arab versus Arab, Sunni versus Shia, Arab versus Israeli, internal upheaval, and Soviet surrogate activity. While the conservative Islamic Gulf states are staunch anticommunists and are aware of the threat of Communist expansion, they believe the strategic nuclear balance and regional stability will deter any direct Soviet military adventurism in the Gulf.[4] It is difficult to sell strategic consensus and the primacy of the Soviet threat to the Arabs when they gaze across their borders to see the continuing expansion and military buildup of Israel. US concern for the Soviet threat takes a back seat to Arab concern for the Israeli threat, and while we worry about the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the Arabs are more concerned about the Israeli occupation of the West Bank.[5]

Intense US military efforts to prevent Soviet intrusion and to preserve the stability and security of the Gulf region may have just the opposite effect. Such efforts could trigger an equal or greater response from the Soviets, creating superpower competition and buildup in the region. There is also a danger of upsetting the delicate social and political balances in the area should the US impose itself in a manner perceived as threatening to regional sovereignty. With the 1967 departure of the Soviets from Egypt and the British from the Gulf in 1971, the reinsertion of a foreign power or its influence may be too difficult for the present Arab leadership to bear. Even the aligned nations, like Saudi Arabia, have refrained from too closely embracing the US "military first" approach to Gulf security. While Egypt and Oman have permitted the United States to undertake military initiatives, they have done so cautiously and at the expense of considerable criticism from other Arab states.[6] Their acquiescence to US overtures was a convenient way to obtain more US aid to support their ailing economies and to meet the demands of their modest, but modernizing military establishments.

On the Israeli side of the ledger, the United States has found the going much easier. In November 1981, eager to shore up strained relations with Israel and provide concrete evidence that the strategic consensus concept was a reality, the United States and Israel signed a Strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Although not nearly as comprehensive and binding as Israel wished, it did tie US strategy to Israel and Israeli strategy to the United States, a welcome event in Israel. The Arab reaction to the event was predictable. They viewed the agreement as an alliance between their enemy and their friend which would serve Israeli purposes to weaken the Arab-US relationship. The agreement precipitated a vocal, anti-

US reaction from the hard-line Arab states and undermined the influence of the moderates in the Arab world. Although the MOU was suspended in December 1981 because of Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights, its existence marked Arab perceptions.[7] In the Spring of 1984, the United States determined it necessary to reinstitute its strategic cooperation agreement with Israel.

With the departure of Secretary of State Haig and the advent of President Reagan's Peace Initiative for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli dilemma, it might be convenient to dismiss strategic consensus as a thing of the past. The policy continues to exist, however, and is being pursued at an accelerated pace in the form of military contingency planning, security assistance, budget requests for US force increases, military construction, and pre-positioning in Southwest Asia.

Both Presidents Carter and Reagan have committed the United States to protect the flow of oil and to insure the security of the Arabian Gulf in the absence of a credible capability to actually do so.[8] This commitment, with limited support from our allies and regional states, puts the United States on a course of unilateralism in pursuing military initiatives in Southwest Asia. In today's world where the vital interests of the US are linked to those of nations in every corner of the globe, unilateralism is not a viable foreign policy option, even for a militarily strong America. The realization that foreign policy is a matter of common interests that requires cooperation from friends and allies is absolutely essential. However, as the prospects for allied and regional cooperation faded, the US accelerated efforts to reinforce its security commitments by increasing its emphasis on the rapid deployment force concept.

united states central command

The envisioned muscle behind President Carter's commitment to use force in the defense of the Gulf has been the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force. Initially a paper force created to demonstrate US resolve and a conventional force counterweight to possible Soviet expansion in the Gulf, the RDJTF has transitioned into a unified command—US Central Command (USCENTCOM)—with its designated area of responsibility as Southwest Asia.[9] In time of crisis, the USCENTCOM will rely upon US-based air and ground forces, and US naval forces in the Indian Ocean to provide the necessary military response to meet the worst-case threat to that region, a Soviet invasion of Iran aimed at controlling access to Gulf oil.

The RDJTF was a political creation, the vehicle to restore the rapidly fading image of the US within the Arab world following the Iranian Revolution, the abandonment of the Shah, the Iranian hostage situation, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In the absence of consistent US policy directing that affirmative action be taken in any of the aforementioned situations, the RDJTF would be living proof that, in the future, the United States was determined to honor its security commitments, protect our vital interests, and reassure our skeptical friends that we would stand behind them.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle facing the USCENTCOM and its associated peacetime activities in the Gulf is its perceived role as an intervention force and the effect of in-place US military personnel on political stability in the region. There is a real danger that a highly visible US military presence and the sacrifice of sovereignty that it implies, would serve as catalysts for internal upheaval within individual

countries, as well as create unacceptable divisons between regional states. Thus far, none of the Arab countries in the Middle East will allow the presence of US forces on its soil. It has become increasingly clear that both Oman and Egypt, who initially seemed disposed to US military initiatives, have become more cautious of US efforts and aware of the potential internal and inter-Arab political problems of too close a military cooperation with the United States.

Facing regional political obstacles, USCENTCOM is clearly limited as the near-term answer to security problems in the Gulf. To meet the threat (it is being structured against a Soviet invasion of Iran) the USCENTCOM will require access to many bases throughout the region, particularly in the countries of the Gulf. Because of strategic logistics and mobility shortfalls, now and in the future, US forces will require a network of bases to pre-position war materials and to use as employment bases against a Soviet invasion. Today, the closest bases to which the US would presumably have access in a crisis are approximately 1000 miles from northern Iran.

Compounding the problems of the new command and its capability to execute its mission are three unrelated equally debilitating factors of concern for US policymakers and military planners. First, inherent in the concept of a multiservice force, is the absolute necessity for joint cooperation between and among the separate military services. In fact, a great deal of cooperation and joint planning has taken place in the lower and middle echelons of the services. However, at the senior levels are irreconcilable doctrinal disputes over the roles, missions, and command and control of significant elements of this multiservice force—internecine squabbles present since the inception of the RDJTF.[10] With these basic

differences as yet unresolved, it is difficult to envision success and efficiency in a large-scale military operation 8000 miles from the United States.

Second, the peacetime responsibilities of a unified command include the administration of security assistance programs, the evacuation of American citizens when necessary, and joint military planning with the host military establishment. To date, the US ambassadors in the region, and the countries themselves, have almost unanimously resisted attempts by the United States to establish a headquarters for the new command in the region from which the multitude of peacetime military programs could be administered. So, not only is the USCENTCOM unable to obtain assured access to regional facilities in a crisis, but it is also meeting obstacles in fulfilling its peacetime role.

Finally, the United States has never reached a consensus with our European allies on the necessity and purpose of the RDJTF and its emphasis on the overt Soviet military threat to the Gulf.[11] Our allies feel that the United States should gear its forces and strategy toward the more likely threats of terrorism, insurgency, and intraregional conflict. This basic philosophical disagreement, coupled with equally pressing economic and political imperatives, has surfaced as European reluctance to assume a greater NATO burden so that the United States can free funds for the development of a rapidly deployable force; to grant overflight and landing rights; and to dedicate their support to the USCENTCOM mission in SWA. US arguments that European interests in the Gulf are as vital as our own and thus should warrant increased cooperation do not seem to carry much weight in the absence of a perceived Soviet threat and the feeling that a US military presence may destabilize rather than add stability to the region.

The relevant question regarding our development of a rapid deployment capability and the essential support infrastructure in the region is whether this near total reliance on military capability to deter the Soviets is worth the long-term political and monetary risks.[12] Can a country with finite political and fiscal resources afford a policy built on seemingly limitless resources? By expanding and encouraging more US military activity in the region are we not risking the very instability we are seeking to avoid?

Some critics view the rapid deployment concept as a convenient vehicle for each military service to justify and obtain additional funds for its own force additions and improvements. Others focus on a US military command in the Gulf as the most obvious example of US insensitivity to regional security concerns and political vulnerability. Rather than focusing our security pledge on regional stability and the longevity of pro-Western, moderate regimes, the United States has committed the military forces to assuring the flow of oil and preventing Soviet military expansion. By focusing on the least likely threat, a Soviet military invasion, the United States has convinced many Arabs that it is insensitive to the vital interests of the region and the more likely threats to those interests.

The planning, budgeting, and structuring of a rapid deployment capability has proceeded at an accelerated pace despite well-intentioned criticism and realistic skepticism from many corners of the Congress, our Embassies, the State Department, and even within the Defense Department. The evolution of the RDJTF into a unified command has increased the urgency to pressure the states of the region to cooperate in the effort. But, the majority of the regional states, fearing internal and political repercussions, have intensified their efforts to hold the United States at

bay. None will allow the USCENTCOM to establish a regional headquarters on its territory. Oman and Egypt, which have granted the United States access and have allowed the conduct of military exercises, have used the opportunity to play on US anxiety to demand more economic and military assistance. This reluctance of the regional states to identify too closely with US military initiatives is conditioned by US military support for Israel, our unwillingness to pressure Israel on the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian situation, the danger of creating a zone of superpower competition in the region, and the possible Arab backlash against overt alignment with a superpower.

The United States is faced with a difficult and deteriorating situation in attempting to implement a foreign policy which focuses on the military instrument of policy and superimposes our perceptions of the threat over those of the region. By energizing the defense establishment to provide military solutions to the immediate problems, we have avoided addressing the difficult diplomatic, political, and intraregional factors uppermost in the minds of Arab leaders. Arab trust and confidence in the United States has slowly but steadily eroded because of the perceived weaknesses in US leadership and judgment. Fortunately, most Arab leaders see no immediate substitute for American technology, expertise, democratic ideals and the ability to provide a strategic counterweight to the Soviet Union. However, we can no longer take Arab dependence on the United States for granted, a dependence which will be resented by the betrayal of Arab confidence with policies which neglect their primary security concerns.

foreign military sales

If Foreign Military Sales (FMS) have become the common coin of US foreign policy worldwide, it is no more evident than in the Middle East. In fact, the ideological bent of the Reagan administration leads it to see threats to US interests primarily in military terms which predisposes it to respond by increasing military strength at home and abroad.[13] Prior to 1979, the United States did not actively promote large-scale weapons sales to Arab states in the Gulf. US arms sales policy was essentially a process of reacting to the inevitable arms requests by regional states, and approving or disapproving the requests on the basis of how such a decision would affect our bilateral relationships with either Israel, Saudi Arabia, or to a lesser degree, Egypt.

In the aftermath of Iran and Afghanistan, the US approach and justification for selling weapons in the Middle East changed dramatically. The perceived Soviet threat and resultant danger to the flow of oil provided the proponents of increased foreign military sales with compelling justification for more foreign military sales. Although often exaggerated, these arguments favor larger and more modern military establishments in the Middle East to increase defensive capabilities.

The US has been following three separate policies regarding arms sales to the region since 1979:

- fulsome military provision of Israel with minimal monetary compensation;
- selective but generous equippage of those Arab States able to pay cash (Egypt is the exception) and whose cooperation we need to protect the oil; and

- reluctant, modest and sometimes disinterested support for those countries of the region who cannot pay cash, unless their purchases are financed by the wealthier Arab States.

Israel is a special case: the US is morally and historically committed to insuring that Israel will maintain a qualitative military superiority over any potential aggressors. The US pipeline of military equipment to Tel Aviv has remained open and Israel has received vast amounts of US equipment, technology, and training. In 1984, under the Reagan proposal, Israel should receive $2.5 billion in military and economic assistance equating to 27 percent of the worldwide total of US aid.[14] Although the transactions for weapons sales between the United States and Israel generally start out on a loan or foreign military sales credit basis with a specific payback period, Israel seldom pays for what they receive. In FY 1982, Israel was excused from paying $950 million in principle and interest on their foreign military sales debt by legislation passed in Congress, and received $1.4 billion in additional FMS credits of which $550 million was waived for repayment.[15] In FY 1983, Israel received an additional $1.7 billion in FMS credits, of which $850 million was in the form of grants.[16] If recent Congressional action is harbinger, the remaining $850 million will be excused or deferred as payment comes due. So far the United States has spent over $15 billion to equip Israel with the latest US weapons. Even though only $6 billion of the total has been in the form of grants, Israel's repayment on the balance has been offset by grants in economic aid that exceed the value of the repayments. Therefore, Israel has paid nothing for its $15 billion in FMS purchases.[17] Despite the scope of US military and financial support,

this support has only influenced, in limited ways, Israeli behavior—behavior which has detracted from our goals of peace and security in the region.

For the US to seriously consider Israel as a strategic asset, in the sense of being a positive force and bulwark against Soviet intrusion in the region, is unrealistic.[18] Recent history will verify that Soviet military support for its client states in the Middle East increases as Israel's military strength grows. In fact, an aggressive, expansionist, provocative Israel could create the very instability most conducive to Soviet penetration. It cannot be denied that Israel exists in a hostile environment and requires a measure of military superiority to insure her very survival. However, allowing Israel to pursue independent and aggressive military and political courses of action inhibits US security cooperation with the Arab states. By passively condoning overt Israel military activity and ignoring Arab pleas to enforce restraint, the United States projects a decided incapacity to act in its own best interests. In the long run, it would be to Israel's benefit to have the US operating from a strong, credible position in the Middle East. However, confident of continued congressional support for its economic and military programs, Israel appears unwilling to sacrifice any authority or territory in the interest of peace. In the present situation, can the United States expect anything different? Is not the short-term goal of establishing Israeli military superiority, without a coincident effort to solve the problems which create the need for weapons, disastrous to US interests in the long term?

From the US perspective, arms sales to the wealthy, pay-as-you-go Arab States—restricted so they do not threaten the security of Israel—are beneficial in several respects. For one thing, the willingness of the

United States to sell and the Arab countries to buy ensures an open channel of dialogue between the parties. This dialogue is especially important when neither side is willing or has the latitude to discuss and negotiate the more pressing issues in the region. In the absence of an open attitude on both sides relative to military equipment needs, the United States might find itself with nothing to talk about and with nothing to offer as a gesture of good faith in holding Arab-US relations together. It is the link between the United States and several countries—Jordan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and North Yemen—that represents the strongest and most visible evidence of the US relationship with these countries. We are rapidly weakening this link however, by what the Arabs perceive as a one-sided security assistance policy in favor of Israel. For example, restricting Gulf State purchases of fighter aircraft to the FX aircraft, which they view as second-class while approving virtually every Israeli request for the most modern weapon systems and FMS grant aid.

Of course, foreign military sales are a boon to the US economy, the petro dollar cash flow problem, and the US defense industry. In Saudi Arabia alone, US military sales have totaled over $30 billion from 1969 to 1980 and the Saudis have paid cash. The AWACS and F-15 packages approved in 1981 will cost the Saudis more than $8.5 billion and $2.5 billion, respectively, in addition to their request to purchase approximately $6 billion in weapons, services, and construction in FY 1983.[19] Although not quite off the ground, an equally avid interest in US weapons has been expressed by the other major oil exporting countries of the Gulf. Combine this cash rich market with the intense competition among US arms producers and the goal of the US government to establish a US-compatible defense establishment throughout the Gulf, and the

importance of security assistance to the US position in the Arab world clarifies.

The sale of US military equipment and its component parts is also inextricably tied to the US goal of protecting against the Soviet military threat. Confronted with Arab reluctance to identify too closely with the United States in its efforts to expand militarily in the Gulf, the United States has been forced to seek alternative means to augment its ability to defend its vital interests. Without guaranteed access to military facilities and pre-positioned stockpiles of war materials, the ability of the US military to respond to major crises in the region is limited. The sale of more and modern US weapons systems would lessen the impact of airlift, logistics, and regional facility deficiencies by creating conditions where the majority of weapons systems in the region are compatible with those employed by the United States; a large US logistics support, management, training, and maintenance system would be available to US forces in a crisis; the large number of US military and civilian personnel required to support weapons packages could serve as an advance party in those countries which won't allow a permanent military presence; and it is hoped that the countries would overbuild and overbuy support facilities and equipment, all of which would decrease logistics and airlift requirements in a contingency situation.

Illustrative of this approach is the effort of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to form a regional air defense system which ties the Gulf countries together in a common defense network.[20] The US preference is to have this regional defense arrangement equipped with US weapons and command and control and warning systems compatible with those employed by the United States. Thus, we could deploy in a crisis and

plug into the existing system. The vast numbers of skilled US technicians and operators which would be required to man this system for the GCC countries would ensure an immediate operational capability when US forces arrived.[21] Although a long way from implementation by the GCC members, this concept is receiving close attention from US defense planners and is a major reason for the eager foreign military sales pitch of the US government officials and defense contractors.

Any discussions of foreign military sales to the Arab countries would be incomplete if the "prestige" factor were not addressed. The Arab world is not unique in this regard, however, especially among the developing nations. The ability to acquire, operate, and display the latest in military technology brings with it a certain status and position of progress and modernization. The sale of modern military technology is also a test of the US relationship with the Arab countries with regard to Israel. To a certain extent, the requests for more and better equipment are a test of how sincere the United States is in support of its Arab friends, and more than that, how far the United States is willing to go in the face of Israeli or Jewish opposition in meeting the perceived defense requirements of the Arab States. It is a situation from which the United States cannot escape as long as it maintains its delicate balancing act between the two sides of the Arab-Israeli dispute.

Perhaps the greatest paradox in our security assistance policy, and the one most troubling to our Arab friends in the region, is our unwillingness to provide them with equipment we both know is necessary for their self-defense while, at the same time, urging greater military cooperation with us to deter and defend against threats to our mutual interests.

Would it not be better to provide them with the capability to defend themselves and perhaps preclude the use of US forces in a crisis in the region?

Regarding those countries in Southwest Asia that request US military assistance but can't pay for it (Israel is the exception), US arms sales policy has been random, haphazard, and inconsistent. A case in point is the security assistance relationship with North Yemen. After the outbreak of the border skirmish between North and South Yemen in 1979, the Saudis requested that they be allowed to transfer a squadron of their F-5 aircraft to North Yemen to bolster the regime of President Salih. The United States would provide advisors to the North Yemen Air Force and backfill the Royal Saudi Air Force with new F-5s. The agreement was struck and the United States and Saudi Arabia established offices of military cooperation in Sanaa, North Yemen. It soon became apparent that the United States was caught in the middle of an internecine squabble between Saudi Arabia and North Yemen over who was in control of the F-5 program. As Saudi Arabia tried to influence President Salih through the aircraft and support they had provided and President Salih attempted to resist the Saudis and pressure the United States by expanding Yemen's military relationship with the Soviet Union, we became the odd man out, fighting to protect our interests and reputation.

To worsen matters, the administration justified this rapid and rigorous response to the Saudi request by publicly portraying the border clashes between North and South Yemen as a major invasion, even when evidence was produced to the contrary.[22] This exaggerated portrayal of the situation with emphasis on the close security ties between the United States and Saudi Arabia became a major embarrassment to the

Saudis, who at the time, were trying to preserve Arab unity and distance themselves from any public portrayal of the United States as their protector and themselves as a US surrogate. Five years later this trilateral relationship is still too unpredictable to determine whether the United States will emerge unscathed, and the long-term goals of the US military effort in North Yemen remain undefined.

Dissimilar but equally ill-conceived security assistance efforts have taken place in Pakistan, Somalia and the Sudan, highlighting the lack of a responsive, overall US Security Assistance Program for regions which should be an integral part of a comprehensive US foreign policy, designed and calculated to further US national interests. Even the initial effort of the Department of Defense to develop a worldwide, five-year FMS plan is inadequate to the task. Packaged in terms of what is best for the United States and structured on US military goals and objectives, the plan ignores many of the political, economic, and social realities of the world with which it deals. In the case of countries we count as allies or security partners, like Turkey and Egypt, US largesse in extending credit for arms purchases is likely to aggravate the enormous debt burdens those countries already face. By delaying payments on principal for as long as ten years and by delaying final payments an additional 20 years, the interest charges may exceed the face value of the loan before the grace period expires, and the purchased equipment may be worn out or obsolete before the loan is paid off. If the present trend continues, by 1985, in Egypt alone just the interest payments on FMS loans would total approximately $450 million a year.[23] To date, the pieces of this puzzle have not been assembled, and US efforts in the security assistance arena are hit or miss, hoping for the best.

access to regional facilities

In contrast to the welcome given US willingness to supply arms in the region, US military initiatives to secure facilities, an on-the-ground military presence, and an increased capability for US forces in the region have met with limited success. After many months of testifying before a reluctant Congress, and after numerous, negotiating sessions with the host governments, Defense and State Department officials were able to justify the military requirements for new military construction (MILCON) and costly improvements to existing military facilities in Oman, Kenya, Somalia, Egypt, and Diego Garcia. Although never certain until the last moment, funds were first provided by legislation in the FY 1981 and 82 budgets to begin the necessary construction.[24] Egypt is the exception, where the mission, location, cost of the proposed construction, and lack of a formal access agreement with the government of Egypt created enough skepticism in Congressional minds to withhold or delay full funding of the proposed projects. While some of the domestic controversy over proposed MILCON projects in Egypt has subsided, the Egyptian government has reportedly reversed its position, in the Spring of 1983, on allowing the United States to construct military facilities at Ras Banas. In an unexpected move, the Egyptian government terminated the majority of US contracting and construction activities and specified that it would continue the effort on its own while still allowing the United States to use the facilities in a contingency situation.[25] This position has since been modified to allow limited, joint US-Egyptian construction.

The major thrust of the US effort has been and continues to be the establishment of a network of air and naval facilities in and around Southwest Asia to

which the United States would have guaranteed access in a contingency, and peacetime use for military exercises, training, and pre-positioning of war materials. The temptation to seek, build, or buy US bases in the region was overcome early in the process for domestic and regional political reasons. Instead, the United States sought permission to construct new facilities and improve existing ones to meet our requirements. The facilities and all the permanent improvements funded by the US would belong to the host governments, and our use of them would be subject to their approval.

The presently proposed military construction programs at the six aforementioned locations total over $1.5 billion through FY 1985. The proposed programs in Egypt and Diego Garcia exceed a half billion dollars each, and the construction program in Oman exceeds $300 million, with further increases expected. The bulk of the money will be spent for port and airfield improvements, fuel and weapons storage, equipment and personnel support facilities, and utility systems improvements. It is a long-term program which remains tenuous at best, and is dependent on continued Congressional funding, favorable support in the host countries, and regional confidence in the United States. Not yet accounted for are the costs chargeable to the US for the operations and maintenance of the constructed facilities. Preliminary examination of the program in Oman indicates that these costs may be in the multimillion dollar per year range.

On the surface, the arrangements we have with the five Southwest Asia countries appear to be a step in the right direction and a partial answer to the difficult problem of being able to deploy, employ, and sustain forces in the region. In reality, however, the entire

concept suffers from uncertainty, questionable assumptions, and difficult problems yet to be solved. Although many argue that any capability is better than none at all and that the United States is doing all it can to make the best of a bad situation, the heart of the matter is that the US may not be getting what it is paying for.

These access arrangements, although helpful, do not add significantly to the US capability to protect the Gulf from a Soviet invasion. Discounting Egypt where funding to improve and build facilities has only been partially authorized, the United States is left with access to facilities in only one country in the vicinity of the Gulf, Oman. But the facilities in Oman are over 1000 miles from Northern Iran, the expected area of confrontation with the Soviets. The facilities in Kenya and Somalia, because of their great distance from the Gulf, would play only a minor support role, if any, in the event US forces must be deployed to the Gulf.

The access agreements are further weakened in that they do not bind the participants. In the case of the formally written agreements with Oman, Somalia, and Kenya, each has a veto power over US use of the facilities in either peacetime or contingency. Because all new facilities the United States makes belong to the host country, US use of the facilities bears upon sensitive sovereignty issues. There are no legal guarantees ensuring what the US buys and builds can ever be used; thus, the US may, despite the major expenditure of time, money, and effort, find itself with no place to go if a crisis arises.

The Egyptian government refused to sign a formal, written access agreement with the United States primarily because they feared even further alienation from the rest of the Arab world than that

which occurred after the Camp David accords and the separate peace with Israel. Thus, although supportive of US efforts to prevent the spread of Soviet influence, Egypt is unwilling to align itself formally with the United States in the face of anticipated opposition from other Arab states and internal political groups. The belated Egyptian decision to limit US MILCON and go it alone with possible Arab financial support bears heavily on US military strategy for the region and could seriously affect our ability to respond to crises in the region.

The complex at Ras Banas was to be the hub of all US activities in the region during peacetime and a vital staging base during contingencies. Without a fully developed facility at Ras Banas, the United States lacks a critical link in the overall network of facilities needed in Southwest Asia, and is left with a lesser capacity to move personnel and equipment into the Gulf during a crisis. Egypt's action points to the inherent sensitivity in the Arab world to over-dependence on and involvement with foreign powers.

Oman is unique in that it is the only country on the Arabian Peninsula to support Camp David and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty. It is also the only Arab country to sign a formal access agreement with the United States; however, their reasons go well beyond the fear of a Soviet invasion of the Gulf. First, there was considerable dissatisfaction within the Omani hierarchy over the British role in maintaining a slow pace of Omanization of the armed forces and the continued and expanded British influence within the military. It was hoped that the US presence would dampen British influence. Second, Oman felt a real threat from South Yemen and sought US assistance in shoring up its military forces. Third, the Sultan was hoping to enlist US support in protecting his regime.

Fourth, Oman has historically been treated as a distant relative among the family councils of its larger and wealthier Arab neighbors. Striking out on its own in support of the US effort was a visible way of asserting its independence and identity in the Arab world.

From the very beginning, the United States assumed that Oman wanted us as much as we wanted them. Unfortunately, we are beginning to realize that Oman wants what we can give them without having us. The Omani ministers who were supportive of US efforts during the access negotiations and who gave the United States a voice in the court of Sultan Qaboos are gone. With a great deal of money and prestige already invested, and with a military requirement for Omani facilities, it is difficult for the United States to exert any pressure of its own to be allowed to proceed with already agreed upon activities.

Four years after the beginning the "military first" approach, and despite committing billions of dollars to the effort, the United States remains seriously deficient in the ability to carry out its security commitments in Southwest Asia. The US does not have guaranteed access to the necessary regional facilities; the USCENTCOM does not have a headquarters ashore in the region; no Arab country will allow the United States to station troops on its territory; and, there is no reason to expect greater cooperation from the Gulf states as long as they perceive the threat differently than the United States and the most pressing regional concerns and security issues remain unresolved. The United States has initiated a military effort of enormous proportions in Southwest Asia without first or coincidentally developing a long-term coherent policy, strategy, and diplomatic framework for the protection of US and regional interests.

"Goli Kashbui dar hamam rosi
Recid as dasti mahbubi bedastam"

These are the first two lines of one portion of [a Persian] poem, which tells of a young woman in the 12th century who goes to her clay-lined pool one morning for a bath. The pool is surrounded by rose bushes. And as she enters the water she mistakenly grabs a handful of clay instead of her soap. She puts it to her face and is surprised that it smells like roses. A dialogue ensues and she says, "Why is it that you, the clay, smell just like roses?" And the clay responds, "You know when two things live together for a very long time they become like one another."

The people of the Middle East have lived in close contact from time immemorial. They are alike in that they share many of the same cultural values and traditions and because Islam is all pervading. Yet the centuries of inter-tribal warfare have carried over to the present and tribal ties often override their ability to get along even though they appear, to one of our senses, similar as the rose and the clay appear similar. Thus, any US policy for Southwest Asia requires US policymakers to get beneath the surface appearances and understand the interests, traditions, culture and religion that separate and

bind the people of the area. One method of doing this is understanding how they see themselves and how they see their relationships to the West and the Soviet Union.

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Carlisle Barracks, 1981

The concept of strategic consensus has never had a chance of acceptance in the Arab world. Despite US rhetoric on the subject and the pleas for Arab cooperation in the defense against the Soviet menace, the idea of an overt and formal alignment, particularly a defense alliance, with one of the superpowers is viewed by the moderate Arabs as the quickest and surest way to ensure superpower competition in the region. From the division of Palestine after World War II and British colonialism in the Persian Gulf, the memory of Western domination and the imposition of foreign power still rings in the memory of every modern Arab leader. To ally with the United States—Israel's strongest supporter—against a Soviet threat that they do not consider imminent, directly contradicts the Arab perception of reality, unity, and destiny.

the threat

This is not to say that the Arabs do not recognize and appreciate the Soviet threat, but it is not an overt Soviet military threat to the Persian Gulf that the Arabs fear most. The threat the Arabs feel, is the creeping, opportunistic intrusion of Communism with its Godless theology—a theology which contradicts the very essence of traditional familial and religious Arab

society. They see this form of the Soviet threat as more likely and more dangerous, particularly in a region subjected to continued civil strife, intraregional conflict, and revolution. Without exception, the Arab will say that the best defense against Communism is stability, and until both the deep-rooted Arab-Israeli-Palestinian and Sunni-Shia problems are solved, the Soviets will not have to rely on their own military force to penetrate and take over the Persian Gulf. Soviet patience and prodding, coupled with tension, radicalism, and rivalries in the region, will allow Soviet influence and ideology to gain a foothold.

A common US perception after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 was that the event shook the Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, and brought home the reality of the Soviet threat. In fact, it was not the Soviet military action which frightened the Arabs, but the incapacity of the United States to prevent or punish the action. Following on the heels of the Iranian revolution and the perceived US abandonment of the Shah, the deep questioning of US will, intent, and capability far outweighed Arab concern over the new Soviet presence in Afghanistan.

In many cases, when dealing with Arabs, we see and hear what we wish rather than what is. Our anxiousness to reach agreement and the pressure to demonstrate success sometimes supersede reason and distort our understanding of the motives of those with whom we are dealing. When a Saudi Arab displays a large map of the Middle East with those areas under Communist influence surrounding Saudi Arabia highlighted in red, and expounds on the Soviet encirclement of the Arabian Peninsula, he is echoing the US preoccupation with the Soviets. He is telling us what we want to hear. He is well aware that his view of the threat will not buy any F-15 or AWACS aircraft in

Washington, but the Soviet threat will. He also knows that the United States will expect Saudi Arabia to be more compromising and conciliatory toward the Arab/Israeli peace efforts if we agree to his weapon requests, but that is one concession he cannot make.

When Oman and Egypt agree to allow the US to build, improve and use military facilities in their countries, they are not acting solely from an overwhelming fear of a Soviet invasion. Through their cooperation, they are urging the United States to consider their security concerns and national interests and expect preferential consideration for economic and military assistance.

It is inconceivable to many Arabs that the United States spends so much time, money, and effort building a military capability to defend against what they consider an unlikely threat, while allowing the instability and irresolution of the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian problem to continue. They worry about our priorities and real interests in the region. Mahmoud Riad, former Egyptian Foreign Minister, articulated this point by linking US purpose to the RDJTF: "The RDF is the brainchild of US policy. Arab policies have no control over such a force: it serves US policy objectives and not Arab ones. These are simply to gain position in the area and to enjoy the benefits of political influence in those countries which agree to accept the presence of the force."[26]

Interviews with Arab officials revealed the following priority of threats which most concern the Arabs today: Israel, Iran and Shi'ism, radical groups, Soviet surrogates, and Soviet military intervention.

Israel's attack on the Baghdad nuclear reactor, annexation of the Golan, continued settlements on the

West Bank, invasion of Lebanon, and unwillingness to trade territory for peace, keep her at the top of the Arab threat list. The Arabs view Israel as the primary cause of tension, instability, and conflict in the region, and the major obstacle to a closer cooperative atmosphere between the United States and the moderate Arabs. Israeli intransigence and bellicosity strengthen radical causes, fuel religious fundamentalism, keep the Palestinian issue hot, and weaken US influence and credibility throughout the area and the world, opening doors for Soviet penetration which would otherwise be closed.

Iran and the unresolved Iran-Iraq war pose an immediate and real threat to the oil-producing states of the Persian Gulf. There is little these states can do to protect themselves against a surprise Iranian attack on the oil facilities. Of even greater concern is the threat of radical Shi'ism exported from Iran into the Gulf where there is a significant Shia population, and where disturbances have occurred with greater frequency over the past few years.

Independent radical groups, revolutionary elements sponsored by Soviet client states, and the activities of potential Soviet surrogates have drawn increased attention and surveillance since the takeover of the mosque in Mecca in November 1979. Partially out of recognition of their vulnerability to radical threats and the fragility of existing regimes and social structures, the Arabs see themselves as beleaguered states, surrounded by enemies, exposed to one crisis after another, without any guarantee of protection from their Western friends. Coupled with this is concern over whether the United States is capable or willing to assist against internal threats which emerge out of hazy, undefined conditions that don't lend themselves to the US definition of the threat, and which may not be directly related to the oil flow.

There is no consensus between the United States and the Arabs on the exact nature and priority of the threat to the countries of the region. Continued Arab, particularly Saudi, ambivalence to US proposals for joint military initiatives and arrangements persists. The fear that the United States will overwhelm its security partners, rather than the threat it is aimed against, continues to prevail. A smothering United States military embrace is as great a threat to regional security as the abandonment of the region by the United States. Whether right or wrong, the Arabs perceive the major threat as instability, with Israel and the Palestinian question at the core. In the absence of an overt military threat to the region, our ability to *obtain* cooperation necessary to insure the protection of US interests and the deterrence of Soviet adventurism in the Gulf will depend directly on the success of US efforts to secure a comprehensive peace.

security cooperation

The idea of a formal security alliance between the United States and the Gulf states is viewed by Gulf leaders as inimical to their interests and relationships with other Arab countries. They understand that US concern and desire for such an alliance stems from our need to project a credible force into Southwest Asia—on short notice—during a crisis. While appreciative of the military advantages of such an arrangement, the Arabs feel such advantages are far outweighed by the political disadvantages. Specifically, the Arabs see the liabilities of too close a security cooperation with the United States as:

- the exorbitant political price an individual country would have to pay with regard to the other Arab countries. The idea of pan-

Arabism and Arab unity is not dead. Any perceived or actual abrogation of sovereignty or publicly entrusting one's security to a foreign power would be tantamount to divorcing oneself from the greater Arab cause of unity and supremacy in the region;

- the memory of Western imperialism and colonialism is too close at hand;

- a formal alliance with the United States is an alliance with the major supporter of Israel, the avowed enemy and most dangerous threat to stability in the Arab world;

- the undercurrent of feeling that the United States would take what advantages it could get, but when drawn to the brink of a crisis, would back off and let its partners fend for themselves;

- a significant US influence or military presence would aggravate or serve as a catalyst for internal dissension by anti-government or anti-US groups within the countries; and,

- an alliance with either superpower would increase competition for influence and control by both sides. Rather than increasing the security of the region, a defense alliance would precipitate a rush to even the balance, bringing the region into center stage as a potential conflict arena.

A large part of the US problem in gaining closer security cooperation is the method the United States is forced to take in obtaining domestic approval for

security initiatives. In order to make a case, proponents of a greater US military capability in Southwest Asia must sell their proposals to the US public, Congress, and various agencies in the Executive Branch. Normally begun at closed departmental and interagency meetings, the process feeds upon itself and quickly escalates into the public arena where the case is usually based on irrefutable intelligence data and the eagerness of regional states for US security assurances. When we begin speaking publicly on behalf of the regional states with regard to their security concerns and their willingness to support US military efforts, we inevitably increase their reluctance to cooperate too closely with the United States. As the cases of the Saudi F-15 and AWACS debates have so clearly delineated to all Arabs, the quickest way to experience the humiliation of public attacks on one's national pride and identity is to become the subject of public debate in the United States. As one unidentified Arab said, "You Americans should learn how to treat your security partners more like private mistresses rather than public whores. In either case you get your way, but in the former, at least the partner retains its dignity."

Additional pacts and formal security arrangements are viewed as superfluous given the existing Arab-Israeli situation and the US relationship to each side in the conflict. According to some Arabs the United States should work toward promoting and supporting existing arrangements such as the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council. It is through these organizations and the unity of the Arab states that the United States can be best assured that its vital interests in the Gulf are preserved.[27]

One area of security cooperation exists which has the support and cooperation of the majority of the Arab

governments: the modernization of regional armed forces with US equipment, training, and support. Aware of their military deficiencies, the Arabs prefer US equipment and training which they feel is superior. Additionally, US willingness to sell the most modern equipment and train Arab forces is visible reassurance that they still count in the competition with Israel for US attention and commitment. What constantly unnerves and discourages them is the domestic US political and media quagmire they must face to prove their worthiness to receive US equipment, while Israeli requests are approved without fanfare and normally with excused payments. Additionally, when US sales of equipment are contingent upon Arab acceptance of restrictions on the use of that equipment while Israel is allowed to violate similar restrictions with no meaningful adverse US reaction, the blow to Arab pride and dignity is not inconsequential.

The Arabs *privately* acknowledge their dependence on the United States as the ultimate guarantor of their security. They are unhappy with this situation and uncomfortable with this dependence; however, for the present, they see no alternative. The doubt cast on US will, determination, and reliability by its responses to recent crises have cast large shadows over US political judgment and willingness to address the difficult problems of the region. Thus, rather than formal alliances and US forces and bases on their territory, the Arab states prefer our presence to be "over the horizon," out of sight but not out of range, available if and when they are needed, but invisible until summoned. On the US side the point is made that an over-the-horizon presence is inadequate. The great distances, limited transport capability, and logistics shortfalls make it imperative that we have a presence ashore and pre-positioned stocks available in the region. The Arabs do not see the

situation in the same light. They can understand these requirements for a Soviet invasion scenario, but to them that is the scenario which is most improbable.

In their view, regional disturbances and internal threats pose the greatest danger, and they believe that existing US military capabilities, though limited, will be adequate. A point made repeatedly by Arab officials during interviews was that the United States should not be so preoccupied with the Soviet military threat to the Gulf. It is understood that a magnified Soviet threat and the creation of the RDJTF is a force-building exercise and a convenient way to get more equipment for the US military services. But the United States should not pressure Arab states to accept ideas they don't believe and the United States should take more care and preparation in being able to meet the real threats to peace in this part of the world.[28]

However, we should not delude ourselves into thinking that Saudi motives for overbuilding its military bases and overbuying military equipment are simply to help us solve our problems. They understand the utility of overbuild and overbuy to us, but first and foremost they are acting in their own best interest and in consonance with their own development plans. We must not assume that overbuild and overbuy is a conscious decision by the Saudis in lieu of a formal basing agreement for US forces, thus implying that they would open their doors and give us the key to their storeroom whenever we felt it necessary. There is nothing unusual and no hidden motivation behind buying and building more than can be used. It is common in all areas of Saudi society. Everything is purchased to excess, particularly those things which may be difficult to come by later on. The idea is to get what you can while the getting is good.[29]

To illustrate, one only has to look at the oversized, sophisticated headquarters buildings and command, control and communications (C^3) facilities constructed for each of the military services in Riyadh. In each instance, the facilities far exceed the requirements of the respective service staffs in terms of office space, technology and capability. Footsteps echo in empty corridors lined with unoccupied offices, and the hardened command and warning centers located underground are utilized at only a small percentage of their capacity. Certainly from the US point of view this trend is to our advantage if we are asked to deploy forces. However, we must base our military planning on the fact that it would be available only *when* and *if* we were invited in and offered the use of excess equipment and facilities. We should not make vital planning assumptions and political judgments on the basis that "overbuild and overbuy" is primarily a form of security cooperation with the US *surrounded* by iron-clad guarantees.

The continuing uncertainty of the Arab-Israeli peace process and the Iran/Iraq war dictate that we continue to exercise both caution and restraint in our efforts to promote greater security cooperation through the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Formed in 1981 with the purpose of creating a forum for greater political, economic and security cooperation among the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, the focus of the GCC has been on regional security affairs prompted by the Iran/Iraq war, the revolutionary regime in Iran, waning confidence in the US as a guarantor of security and a perceived deterioration in the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. Under the aegis of the GCC, member countries insist that the defense of the Gulf remain in their hands, and that neither superpower should or can dictate how the GCC members should provide for their own security.

We must not risk alienating any or all of the GCC members or precipitate the demise of the organization by becoming too heavy-handed or insistent on reaching our unilateral goals. The fear that the United States will carelessly barge into the regional affairs of the GCC—if we get our foot in the door—is ever-present in the minds of the GCC leaders. They will allow our silent partnership and advisory role so long as it remains just that. They are insistent that neither their friends nor foes identify them individually or collectively with the United States as formal partners in the defense of the region. Whether we like it or not, and whether or not it satisfies our immediate imperatives, security cooperation will continue to be implemented on Arab terms as long as they feel US connections would intensify the primary threats or would promote even greater intra-regional disharmony.

national interests

An essential aspect of international diplomacy is defining and understanding the vital national interests of the country with which you are dealing. The conduct of foreign affairs should begin with identifying common interests, developing a diplomatic approach based on those interests, and realizing that sovereign nations seldom risk contradicting what they consider their own national interests.

For the most part, US vital interests in the Middle East are not incompatible with the interests of the Arab countries. Arab nations also want the free flow of oil, stability in the region, freedom from outside influence, and the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The exception, of course, is the US commitment to the survival and security of Israel,

which the Arabs feel has been carried out at their expense and in contradiction to the real strategic interests of the United States in the area.

The specific national interests of the Arab countries are generally understood and accepted by Middle East policymakers in the US government. However, where we often fail, and what the Arabs often perceive, is in our lack of consideration for these interests in our policymaking process. The Arabs view national sovereignty, political stability, preservation of Islam, and a smooth transition to modernization as their primary goals. They believe achievement of these goals would insure the continued free flow of oil from the Gulf and preserve regional stability.

It is incomprehensible to Arabs that the United States could realistically consider, and publicly pronounce, Israel as a vital strategic asset of the US in preventing the encroachment of communism into the region. They see the vital interests of the United States in the Persian Gulf, not in Israel. In their minds, an intransigent, combative Israel promotes regional conditions conducive to Soviet penetration.

In addition to the US commitment to Israel, the primary divergence in views between the United States and the Arab states centers on how best to go about insuring the protection of our vital interests. The Arabs are convinced that the United States is too preoccupied with the overt Soviet military threat and an in-place US military capability in the region, and thus, insensitive to Islamic and Arab interests. Mahmoud Riad commented:

> **The RDF is a continuation of US strategy. It aims to defend US interests as defined by US politicians. I don't dispute the right of any state to**

> define its interests. The question is, does its definition of its interests and the way in which those interests are pursued benefit me, or are they defined and conducted at my expense? A foreign force on my territory, particularly that of one of the superpowers, is bound to have an effect on my decisionmaking. I may be forced to take decisions that harm my interest, even in the economic field. At worst, these countries which agree to accept the RDF will be subordinate to US policy and interests.

To further illustrate, Riad said:

> If US policy opposed Israeli occupation of Arab lands, then we would say the interest of the RDF coincided with our own. On the contrary, US policy is unable to restrain Israel. It continues to provide it with the most sophisticated arms and with funds to further its building of settlements on the West Bank and Gaza.[30]

Where we have projected our interests globally, the Arabs are still operating primarily in a regional context. Although perhaps overstated and oversimplified, Arab ambassadors and government officials have responded to the question of "how best to protect US interests" in essentially the same way: "The United States should concentrate its efforts and resources on solving the Israeli problem. Then you would not have to worry about the Soviets, and you would get whatever military cooperation you need from the Arab states." Certainly not all the problems in the region will disappear even with a satisfactory Arab-Israeli-Palestinian settlement, but it is the single-most important issue in the Arab view. Therefore, we should realize that any attempts to address political problems with military solutions may be counterproductive or rejected and the security

cooperation we require will remain limited. In the meantime, we should expect the Arabs, and the Gulf states in particular, to conduct relations with us based on *their own* national interests in the context of the unresolved Arab-Israeli-Palestinian dilemma.

US will and reliability

Perhaps the most significant development in US-Arab relations over the last four years is the erosion of Arab confidence in the will, capability, and reliability of the United States as a viable security partner. Brought about by a series of contradictory actions and inactions, and a significant amount of uncertainty resulting from confusing signals concerning US interests and commitments in the Gulf region, this questioning of US will and reliability is a major factor limiting the nature and extent of security cooperation the US can expect in the Gulf today.

During the Nixon administration US security policy in the Gulf was predicated on the "twin pillars" of security—Iran and Saudi Arabia—to defend our mutual vital interests. With the exception of Israel, major US security assistance efforts in the Middle East were directed toward these two countries. Although the Shah and Iran represented a political and religious rival to the Sunni Arab states in the Gulf, Iran was perceived as a stabilizing force in the Gulf littoral, and because of its close ties to the United States, an insurance policy against any disruption of the flow of oil. There was little doubt in the minds of the Gulf Arabs that US support and commitment to the Shah were unequivocal, and that US influence in Iran would act as a restraining force on the Shah if he were to become overly ambitious.

In 1979 the exodus of the Shah and his family, coupled with the installment in power of the militant, fundamentalist Islamic regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini, created a crisis in confidence in the Gulf states. That the United States could abandon and deny haven for the Shah, an ally for almost four decades, was unthinkable to the Arabs who sacrifice and endure personal hardship for friendship's sake. Never did the Arabs blame the United States for the events which brought the Shah down, nor for our inability to prevent them. What stretched the limits of their confidence was the unwillingness of the United States to stand by the Shah, and the incapacity of the United States to deal with his successors and the effects of his removal on the region. Above all, the US response to Iran, or lack thereof, raised fundamental questions in the minds of the Arabs about the validity and utility of a security arrangement with the United States. There was, and still is, a persistent fear that the US security commitment applies only to the preservation of the flow of oil and not to the survival of the leadership or governments in the Gulf. The nagging doubts over whether the United States can be relied upon to preserve the sovereignty and security of a threatened state continue to exist. To the Arabs, the US response to the Iranian situation raised a red flag. They did not question the military capability of the United States to deal with the internal situation and possible spillover effects of the Iranian revolution because they did not believe the military option would be viable in resolving the situation. The warning flag was raised when they realized that they may have overestimated the sincerity of the United States as a protector and trusted security partner. They began to wonder if the word of the United States was backed up by its leadership and national will. Cracks began to appear in the foundation of the special relationships we felt we had established with the moderate, oil-producing states,

and the impetus to proceed with more binding, cooperative security arrangements began to wane.

The impact of the US-Israeli relationship on the Arab perception of with whom the United States will ultimately side and who will benefit most from US political, economic and military influence, cannot be overstated. To a certain extent, the United States is respected for not abandoning its historical, moral, and emotional commitment to Israel. It demonstrates a certain resolve on our part, and engenders a hope that we may someday support our Arab friends in the same manner. However, the Arabs have a great deal of difficulty rationalizing open-ended US support for Israel with a policy that specifies that the vital, strategic interests of the United States lie in the Persian Gulf. Although they have acquired a greater understanding of the impact of US domestic politics on our foreign policy, they often plead for an explanation of why we allow internal politics to influence foreign policy decisions which could jeopardize our stated national interests and the stability of the region wherein those interests lie.

From an Arab perspective, continued US inaction toward Israeli settlements on the West Bank, Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights, further Israeli entrenchment in Jerusalem, and Israeli intransigence in the peace process all undermine US efforts toward greater security cooperation. In fact, as much as the Arabs loathe discussing or admitting a loss of dignity and face, they will say that they feel maintaining their friendship with the United States in this imbroglio means subjecting themselves to a process of protracted humiliation. "Fortunately for you, we have forgiven most of your insensitivities. Because of our own weaknesses, limitations and dependence on you, we have closed one eye and excused your mistakes. But we

will remember them and your debt will come due. We have patience."[31]

The Saudi reaction to the Camp David Accords and the separate Egyptian-Israeli peace is indicative of the Arab perception that the United States is insensitive to Arab political concerns. In the two years prior to the peace agreement, the administration had intensively sought to reassure the Saudis that ours was a "special relationship," and in keeping with this relationship, all issues of mutual interest would be addressed through consultation and a continuing dialogue. For various reasons the United States chose both not to consult with the Saudis nor to seek their support for the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement. The Saudis were informed of the agreement after the fact with the expectation that they would endorse and support it. The Saudis were greatly offended by this presumption, this betrayal of their confidence within the framework of the alleged "special relationship." The Saudis were insulted that the United States would consider them peripheral and nonessential to the issue of Middle East peace.

Rather than proving to the Arab world that the US peace initiative demonstrated our intent to insure a just and equitable settlement agreeable to all concerned parties, it furthered suspicions that US promises could not be counted on, and that we would act unilaterally in our own interests, even if those personal interests adversely affected internal and intraregional affairs. This attitude prevails and is a major inhibitor to US proposals and initiatives to develop a US military capability in the Gulf region.

Two other unrelated events took place which added to the growing skepticism in the Gulf concerning US will and reliability. To the Arab countries, the

failure of the Iranian hostage rescue mission in April 1980 was not so much an indication of a lack of US capability to successfully execute military operations as it was a lack of US confidence in the Gulf countries to cooperate and assist in this mission. When it became known that we fabricated cover stories to conceal the purpose of our using Gulf airbases to conduct the rescue attempt—rather than requesting advance permission—the Arabs were privately dismayed that we had so little trust in them and that we unilaterally violated their sovereignty by using their facilities under false pretenses. They understood the need for total secrecy and were sympathetic to the plight of the hostages, but they still resented US disregard for their sovereignty and political concerns, and our lack of faith in their ability to provide needed cooperation and support.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979 and the lack of a forceful US response further deepened doubt about US reliability and political awareness. Fully expecting a decisive US response to the Soviet move and hoping for clear evidence of our commitment to regional security that they could use against regional critics of the United States, the Arabs were presented with an oblique diplomatic-economic response which did little to reassure them that we were willing or able to back up our security rhetoric. The real concern of the Arabs, expressed privately, was not that they would wake up the next day to find Soviet soldiers standing on the shore of the Persian Gulf. Their apprehension centered on their not knowing what the United States really stood for and the growing feeling that the US would use force only if the flow of oil were actually threatened.

Certainly we have taken some positive action to staunch eroding confidence in the United States as a

security partner. The deployment of F-15 aircraft to Saudi Arabia and the subsequent delivery of F-5 aircraft to North Yemen during the North-South Yemen border crisis of 1979, the increased US naval presence in the Indian Ocean, the stationing of AWACS aircraft in Saudi Arabia in response to the Iran/Iraq war, military support for F ;ypt and the Sudan in response to Libyan provocations, the US peace-keeping role in Lebanon, and US willingness to provide modern weapons and training to Egypt and the oil-producing countries in the Gulf have all served to restore faith in our security relationship. However, the Arabs realize all too well that this relationship has not been fully tested. The United States has not had to commit forces in battle to preserve mutual interests. The doubt over whether we would commit forces and whether it would be only to protect our own interests is of constant concern to the Arabs.

In the final analysis, the United States needs Arab cooperation as much as the Arabs need us to preserve our mutual interests. The limited US ability to project and sustain military force in the region and the incapability of the Arabs to defend themselves are rational reasons for greater security cooperation. The fact that we have not reached minimum essential cooperation on security issues is not indicative of a lack of concern on either side. What it does indicate is a lack of understanding and acceptance of the nuances of each party's security concerns and a perception that the respective security concerns are misplaced and inappropriate. The United States is convinced that linking increased military cooperation to a settlement of the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian situation is not realistic in terms of the immediate Soviet threat. The Arabs, in turn, feel that the real threats to security are contained within the region, and that the instability caused by the unresolved Arab-Israeli-Palestinian issue create the conditions most conducive to Soviet penetration.

The solution to this problem of perception and the attainment of greater accommodation in the security arena cannot be reached by addressing the issues from a predominantly military perspective. The examples cited earlier of decreasing Arab confidence in US will and reliability stem from perceived US political misjudgments and our failure to consider the significance of emotional, psychological and historical factors in the behavior and viewpoints of the Arabs. We must not delude ourselves into thinking that Arab pride, insistence on consensus, and linkage of the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian problem to US military initiatives are inappropriate. Arab views will remain fundamental determinants in Arab decisionmaking. It is our task to reconcile the differing views and perceptions of our two worlds, through both political and diplomatic means, to foster the cooperative atmosphere and trust required to enable us to develop the military capability necessary to protect our interests in the region.

US military presence in the region

With the unresolved Arab-Israeli-Palestinian problem, memories of Western imperialism, revolutionary regimes in and around the region, Arab rivalries and divisions, and US support of Israel, a permanent US military presence is not desired by the Arabs. There would be no hesitation to request US military assistance in a crisis. However, to have a US military force stationed permanently in one of their countries, the Arabs believe, would invite condemnation from other moderate Arabs, internal political pressure, and possible reprisals from radical Arab groups. Additionally, the Arab states, and particularly those in the Gulf, would like to prevent the region from becoming a zone of superpower competition. A widely held Arab belief is that the

stationing of US troops in the region would not only increase superpower competition for position and influence in peacetime, but would also serve to designate the region as a superpower battleground in any future conflict.

Despite the fact that, from a military perspective, it is essential for the United States to have a military presence ashore in the region in order to guarantee the security commitments of the Carter and Reagan administrations, the United States has used great care in avoiding the term "bases" and has instead referred to "facilities" available to the United States in time of crisis. The Arabs have categorically refused to consider US bases, which imply US control and a permanent military presence on their territory. Privately, Arab leaders have indicated that they would be more receptive to a US military presence if the inter-Arab and radical group pressures associated with the Middle East peace stalemate could be alleviated. In other words, a significantly closer security relationship would be much more acceptable and desirable with the United States when we have demonstrated a commitment and ability to engineer an Arab-Israeli-Palestinian solution. This is no guarantee, however, and is likely to be more of a carrot to the United States on the peace issue than it is a promise to allow a US military presence in the region.

Arab government and military leaders understand fully the difficulties for the United States in projecting a large-sized force a distance of 8,000 miles. They are well aware of the advantage and necessity for facilities and a military presence already available in the region. However, in this instance, as in most matters with the potential to strain the bond between one Arab country and the Arab community, practicality and pragmatism give way to traditional ideals, symbology,

and the theoretical preservation of Arab unity. Furthermore, the question of sovereignty, nationalism and independence must be considered when examining Arab motives. For an Arab country to acquiesce to a foreign military presence would be tantamount to admitting to its citizens, the Arab community and the world as a whole, its inability to defend itself. Even if this lack of capability is common knowledge, the admission of it is unthinkable.

Although the Arabs need and expect a US security umbrella, they don't want us to get too close. Conversely, the United States, which needs the increased military capability afforded by facilities and presence, cannot get close enough. To date, no amount of military rationale or threat rhetoric has convinced the Arabs otherwise and is unlikely to in the future, unless the United States is willing to confront directly the diplomatic, political and psychological barriers to our security efforts in the Arab world.

The thrust of US policy in Southwest Asia has been to develop and support a framework for peace and security in the region. Unfortunately, our success has been limited, as evidenced by continuing conflict in Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, another Arab-Israeli war in Lebanon, and virtual stalemate in any progress toward resolving the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian problem. US diplomatic efforts in seeking a comprehensive peace have suffered from inconsistency, conflicting interests, and a lack of resolve and staying power. Our emphasis and determination continue to peak during and immediately after each new crisis, then dwindle into inaction once the killing stops. US military efforts to protect our interests have intensified, but have been relatively ineffective, since they address symptoms, not causes, and do not resolve the issues arising from fundamental political, social and economic problems.

Protecting US interests and furthering peace in Southwest Asia, where the status quo is unacceptable and change usually means conflict, will require a much greater appreciation of local interests and aspirations. Our capability to influence and steer events is severely limited in this region where mistrust of our goals, capabilities, and intentions prevail. Throughout history, outside powers seeking to dominate or share the region have failed in the end because they ignored the regional dynamics and, most importantly, the local perceptions of those dynamics. It is essential that we look behind the rhetoric and vague references to mutual understanding and cooperation and examine

our actions and pronouncements through regional eyes. Perhaps then we can impart a more realistic sense of direction to our policy and avoid the mistakes of the past.

We must continuously remind ourselves that a US military capability to deter and defeat the Soviets is not a panacea for all the United States or regional problems. Nor can the military alone be counted on to defend the region and our vital interests. It should also be apparent, in the aftermath of Vietnam and Iran, that military power, in the form of assistance or presence, is not necessarily able to repel a popular, fanatical, indigenous revolutionary movement—even when that movement is openly backed by the Soviets. In addressing critical security issues in Southwest Asia, it is just as important to develop and display political and diplomatic strength as it is to possess military capability. Cooperation, respect and mutual understanding will continue to be the consequence of successful diplomacy; it establishes access and confidence in relations with other nations, even where politics may be sharply divergent.[32]

The utility of security assistance and the transfer of massive amounts of military equipment as *quid pro quos* for political cooperation, access to bases, and as a supplement to limited US military capabilities should be rigorously examined. We have provided Israel with over $15 billion in weapons for which she has paid nothing, and Egypt is now following in Israel's footsteps toward costly dependence on US generosity. Given the state of Egypt's economy, either the United States or a third country will have to bear the cost of this FMS debt.[33] The US security assistance program in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states must be scrutinized in terms of the expanding foreign presence it entails, and the resulting effects of that presence on the social,

religious, and traditional fabric of these societies. Stability in each of these areas may be more critical to peace and security in the region than is military capability.

Past US efforts to use security assistance as an inducement to influence behavior and create an atmosphere of compromise in the region have had little lasting effect. To the contrary, a sale of weapons to either an Arab country or Israel has allowed that recipient a greater sense of security—even rigidity of its position—while fostering insecurity on the other side. The predictable result has been a series of requests for more and better weapons to constantly even the balance. In the end, the United States finds itself in the position of a weapons supplier, resented by both sides for the dependence we create, with no better prospects for agreement and compromise on major peace and security issues.

The critical appraisal of US efforts to throw money and equipment at problems in lieu of a sustained economic and political approach should be an issue of top priority. Security assistance must be considered as only one element in the broader context of US foreign policy and defense strategy. And as a means to an end, security assistance should support and complement US diplomacy, not substitute for it. Weapons alone cannot provide peace and security in a region where perceived military superiority, on one side or the other, and unresolved political problems have habitually led to war.

President Carter's commitment to defend the Persian Gulf, reiterated by President Reagan, demands proof that the United States can back up that commitment. Perceived US lack of will and reliability, unabated military support for Israel, and an inability

or unwillingness to move Israel toward concession, all adversely affect our ability to be taken seriously, even militarily. The Arabs have tied their cooperation on security matters directly to US efforts in the peace process, their view of the Soviet threat, regional concerns, and internal political stability. Further US overtures to gain access to bases, to establish a permanent military presence, and to stockpile equipment in the region will continue to meet resistance until we work to understand the security concerns of the Gulf states and their perception of the US role in the region. Further avoidance of these factors will place the vital interests of the United States, the West, and the region at risk, and limit or negate the effective use of the military instrument.

Although military force is a necessary and often decisive element of our foreign policy, its success is dependent on the nature and timing of its use. In Southwest Asia the Soviets have the obvious advantages of proximity and large, in-place forces. We cannot afford to ignore this potential military threat and our security policy should endeavor to create conditions of political, economic, and military stability in the region which would act as natural repellents to Soviet intrusion and which would allow us to successfully use military force if needed. But without regional cooperation, it is unlikely that we would be able to deploy, employ, and sustain a military force large enough to defeat a determined Soviet invasion of the Gulf. The absence of formal alliances, bases, and an in-place US military presence block a purely military solution to US security concerns in the Gulf. However, we have set a "military first" course and to insure a credible military capability—while working toward peace and stability—requires a bold departure from the established policymaking process.

Innovation and change are always difficult because they include criticism of existing structures, infringement on parochial interests, and invasion of jealously guarded turf. To develop an effective, long-term foreign policy and strategy for implementing it, policymakers must consider the larger spectrum of domestic political and economic interests.

The obstacles in developing and carrying out diplomatic and political initiatives which address longstanding problems and aim at permanent solutions are many. Examining the problems of effective policymaking, Henry Kissinger highlighted four major factors inhibiting the policymaking process: (1) the experience of decisionmakers not fitting the nature of the problems they must deal with; (2) the lack of moral fortitude to risk oneself on assessments that cannot be proven true; (3) the process of getting elected bearing little relation to the purpose of the election; (4) the management of the bureaucracy taking as much, if not more, energy than dealing with the problems to be solved; and, (5) the breakdown of domestic consensus, without which, in a democracy, no foreign policy can be sustained.[34] None of these problems defy solution. A strong leader, committed to long-term, permanent solutions to persistent problems, can break down, or at least diminish, these inherent barriers of our democratic system.

As a first step, a separate and independent strategic policy group chartered by the President and reporting directly to him through the Advisor to the President for National Security affairs should be created.[35] To establish and retain credibility, this group should be chaired, full-time, by an invidivual with access to the separate branches of government, intimate knowledge of Middle East peace and security issues, freedom from political debts and loyalties, and

the imagination and fortitude to defy convention when bold decisions are required. He must also have earned the respect and trust of the President and various segments of the special interest groups whose inviolate influence is not always in the nation's best interest.

The policy staff should be small, compact, and enjoy a separate status and career protection to allow its members to compete with their contemporaries in their parent services, and advance according to their abilities and contribution. They should be carefully selected with primary consideration given to those who have the necessary institutional memory, regional, and functional expertise, and a proven record of success even when exceeding the conventional bureaucratic limits of innovation and creativity. They must be risk-takers, uninhibited by parochial edicts and willing to challenge the influence of special-interest groups.

In contrast to present policy in the region, the group will have to develop strategy and examine options which greatly expand our time-horizon with respect to US involvement in the region. Solutions to individual crises and problems cannot be viewed as ends in themselves, but must be approached and implemented in a manner which contributes to the achievement of long-term goals. Careful consideration must be given to all areas of foreign policy, particularly the military, political, diplomatic, and economic relationships. Henry Kissinger addressed the need for vision and long-term goals: "It may be possible to segment domestic decisions into a series of individual actions, but it is not possible to conduct a foreign policy without a vision of the world that one wants to bring about, some definition of what one means by peace and by justice and by order and stability and by progress. If one does not have that vision, one runs the risk of a

series of unrelated tactical decisions."[36] Above all, the United States must endeavor to put the military instrument in perspective. The strategy group must be in a position to evaluate the options and benefits of the military in executing foreign policy and how best to use it to complement and strengthen the other instruments of foreign policy.

The strategic policy group must establish a foundation upon which a consistent foreign policy can be built. Inconsistency and unpredictability are sometimes desirable to keep an adversary off balance. But inconsistency and hollow rhetoric are confusing and resented by our friends. We must reverse the trend of ad hoc, contradictory reactions to each individual event and crisis. Instead, we must relate the means to the end and bridge the gap between our national policy and the instruments available to achieve our goals. A national policy executed in the absence of end goals and desired outcomes is not a complete policy. It is only dangerous.

endnotes

1. *The Persian Gulf: Are We Committed? At What Cost?* A Dialogue with the Reagan Administration on US Policy, prepared for the use of the Joint Economic Committee (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1981).

2. *The Middle East* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1981), vol. 5, p. 82. In 1978, 66% of Japan's oil imports came from the Persian Gulf. The UK, France, W. Germany and Italy imported 82%, 68%, 38% and 65% respectively from the Gulf. See George E. Hudson, "Non-Regional Impacts of Southwest Asian Policy: The US-Soviet-OECD Triangle," *US Strategic Interest in Southwest Asia* (Praeger, New York, NY: 1982), p. 145.

3. King Hussein Interview, *International Herald Tribune*, 10 August 1981.

4. *The Middle East*, p. 74.

5. See David D. Newsom, "Miracle or Mirage: Reflections on US Diplomacy," *The Middle East Journal* 3 (Summer 1981).

6. See Christopher Van Hollen, "Don't Engulf the Gulf," *Foreign Affairs* 59 (Summer 1981): 1064-1078. A detailed, critical essay on US policy in the Persian Gulf and the dangers of a heavy-handed US approach to the region.

7. See John C. Campbell, "The Middle East: A House of Containment Built on Shifting Sands," *Foreign Affairs* 60 (Fall 1982): 593-629, for more detail on the significance of the MOU and the fragile base upon which US policy rests in the Middle East.

8. The capability of US military forces to defend the Persian Gulf from a Soviet invasion are still being questioned. The Congressional Budget Office and the Joint Economic Committee staff have estimated that it will cost the US

approximately $163 billion to develop the military capability necessary to carry out the Carter/Reagan Doctrine for defense of our vital interests in the Persian Gulf.For additional details on RDF limitations, see Jeffrey Record, "The Rapid Deployment Force: Problems, Constraints and Needs" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (September 1981): 109-120.

9. Conspicuously absent from USCENTCOM's area of responsibility are Israel, Syria, and Lebanon. US policymakers consciously excluded these countries because of their designation as the primary confrontation states in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This decision reflects US intent to separate the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian issue from the security of vital US interests (oil) in the Gulf. The separate treatment of these two crucial elements is indicative of the disparate, sometimes mutually exclusive, US policies in the region. This concise division of issues is also erroneously seen as an expedient way to avoid or delay confronting the difficult Arab-Israeli problem, preserve strong ties to Israel, and still gain Arab support and cooperation in defending US interests against the Soviet military threat.

10. See Richard Burt, "Army and Marines in Battle over Command of Rapid Deployment Force," *New York Times*, 10 December 1980. At the time of this article, the yet-to-be-fought battle over the command and control of air assets between the Air Force and the Marines had not begun. This controversy of roles and missions of the two services that would have to fight side by side as part of the RDF is in full swing today, and is a prime inhibitor of effective contingency planning for employment of the RDF. For details of this controversy, see Jeffrey Record, *The Rapid Deployment Force and US Military Intervention in the Persian Gulf* (Cambridge, MA: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Inc., 1981) pp. 56-57.

11. For a European view of US policy in the Middle East and details of the differing US and European perspectives on the threats to Western interests in the region, see Lord Christopher Soames, "Why Europe and America Disagree on the Middle East," *Washington Post*, 1 December 1982, p. A-27.

12. See "Weinberger Seeks $2 Trillion for Defense," *Washington Post*, 18 March 1983, p. A-4.

13. Harry J. Shaw, "US Security Assistance: Debts and Dependency," *Foreign Policy* 50 (Spring 1983): 108.

14. Ibid., p. 106.

15. See *Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Military Construction, Sales and Military Assistance Facts*, Data Management Division, Comptroller, Defense Security Assistance Agency, September 1982; and the *Congressional Presentation Document*, Security Assistance Programs, 1983.

16. See "House Panel Adds $365 Million to Grants Requested for Israelis," *New York Times*, 14 April 1983, p. A-6.

17. Shaw, "U.S. Security Assistance," p. 117.

18. For an insight into the Reagan administration's views on Israel and the characterization of Israel as a "vital strategic asset" instrumental in deterring Soviet expansion, see "A Vision of America Frozen in Time," *Washington Post*, 24 April 1980, p. A-1.

19. For a detailed breakout of US foreign military sales in the Middle East, see *The Middle East*, vol. 5, pp. 47-70.

20. Formed in 1981, members include Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman. For additional information on the GCC and regional security cooperative efforts, see Shahram Churbin, *Security in the Persian Gulf: The Role of Outside Powers* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1982), vol. 4, pp. 145-161.

21. For details on regional efforts toward security cooperation and the US role and intent in this endeavor, see Robert Manning, "Rapid Deployment: Force or Farce?" *South*, March 1983, pp. 10-13.

22. Testimony of Lt. Col. John J. Ruszkiewicz, former Defense Attache to the Yemen Arab Republic, before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, 5 May 1980.

23. Shaw, "US Security Assistance," p. 119. Mr. Shaw's analysis of US security assistance policy and procedures, their impact on recipient debt burden and value as an instrument of foreign policy should be read and understood by everyone making US security policy decisions.

24. *The Middle East*, vol. 5, pp. 78-80.

25. For further details see: *Washington Post*, 21 May 83, p. A-18 and *New York Times*, 20 May 83, p. A-8.

26. Judith Vidal-Hall, "Plugging the Gap," an interview with Mahmoud Riad, *South*, March 1983, p. 17.

27. This point was raised and expounded upon by two Arab Ambassadors to the United States during interviews conducted in November 1982. At the time it was obvious that they were resistant to the idea of any type of formal defense agreement with the US.

28. This was a common theme in virtually every interview conducted with Arab diplomats in the US and Arab officials in the region during the latter months of 1982. The Soviet threat was always viewed as secondary and less threatening than intraregional problems. In each case the "real threat" always meant Israel.

29. This revelation, or admission, was offered by both US military advisors and Saudi military officials in Riyadh. If their extra efforts help us when they need us and ask for us, so much the better; but they are spending their money on additional stocks and facilities in their own national interests, not just ours.

30. See Vidal-Hall, "Plugging the Gap," p. 17, for an extremely candid and representative Arab view of the dangers of US military policy in the Middle East and perceived US insensitivity to Arab goals and interests.

31. This attitude seemed to be more prevalent in the civilian sector of Arab governments. Envious and somewhat resentful of the US world position and overall successful development, they don't want to be viewed as third-rate countries or backward societies. This quote from a prominent intellectual at one of the leading universities in the region is representative of this feeling.

32. Newsom, "Miracle or Mirage," p. 299.

33. Shaw, "US Security Assistance," p. 11.

34. Henry Kissinger, "The Realities of Security," *AEI Foreign Policy and Defense Review*, 1982, vol. 3, no. 6, p. 11.

35. This concept is not new. Among others, General Albert Wedemyer, who served as a primary strategy advisor to President Roosevelt during World War II, recommended the establishment of a national strategy board, composed of lofty, nonpartisan members, tasked to consider future US policy and strategy. See Hugh Sidey, "A Prescient Soldier Looks Back," *Time*, 7 March 1983, p. 30.

36. Kissinger, "Realities of Security," p. 11.

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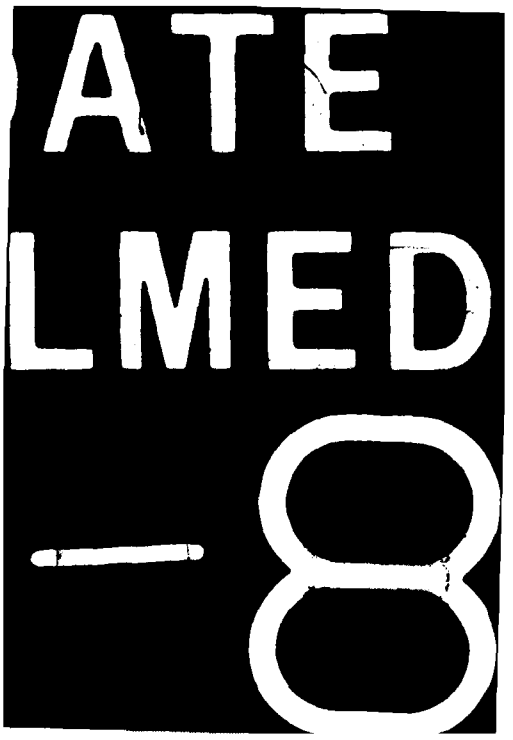
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